

Running Briefs



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Running Briefs
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YOUR "MEDIA LIAISON" SPEAKS

Some runners in Fairbanks move away and create a race elsewhere. Others make a second home and discover that area's unique running events. Yet others travel abroad and participate in international events. This issue has an example of each. And not much else.

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Gardner creates trail race in San Antonio



By **BILL GARDNER**

Running in Fairbanks for seven years spoiled me. I was used to running on beautiful wooded trails before moving to San Antonio, Texas in 1997. One of the things I missed most about Fairbanks is that so many of the runs are trail runs, even the marathon. While I found a surprising number of trail runs scattered throughout Texas, there were none right in the city. I wanted to have a race down here like the Fairbanks trail runs. So I decided to recreate one in an 850-acre local park just north of downtown San Antonio.

McAllister Park quickly became my favorite running spot as I discovered a network of cross-country trails that were mostly used by mountain bikers at the time. It took a couple years of us living here before I realized the extent of the trail system. Once I did, I was able to come up with a

ten-mile loop and with the support of the local running club, we staged the first Prickly Pear 10 Mile Trail Run in 2002.

We're now getting ready for the fifth annual race, which always takes place right around Cinco de Mayo. After the first year, we added a 50-kilometer race, which consists of three ten-mile loops. The trails are single-track, shaded, mostly dirt and some rock, with mesquite trees, oaks, plenty of deer and other wildlife, and of course prickly pear cactus in bloom around race time.

This is a special race because we make it so much fun. First of all we stock all the aid stations to the hilt with everything any runner could ever want. I added everything that I could ever want in a race – well-stocked aid stations, strategically placed so runners don't have to carry their own water, well-marked trails... and beer. Every year we've worked with a distributor to get some kegs donated for Prickly Pear runners to enjoy. This year we'll be drinking Alamo Golden Ale, a local brew. In addition, we have a huge barbecue pit that we fire up to do a big fajita cookout, complete with rice and beans.

—See "Prickly Pear", page 3

Lyle loves it: Hawaii's crazy Kilauea

By JOHN LYLE

Dostoyevsky once said, "Suffering is the sole origin of consciousness". Some runners might argue that exhilaration is another pathway to consciousness, or that perhaps there exists a twisted but fine line between suffering and exhilaration; a back and forth that happens when runners push themselves to the edge, or beyond.

Though many try to compare and rank different marathons according to difficulty, doing so is difficult and subjective. How can anyone know for sure? All marathons can be extremely difficult. It's all relative. Pain is pain. And one person's pain is another's pleasure, and so it goes.

Having run both the Equinox and Kilauea (Hawai'i) Marathon several times, people often ask me which is harder. It's one of those questions without an answer, I say. Both races reflect the character and spirit of the place, much like the relationship between Alaska and Hawai'i. As Alaska can be a stoic and strong older brother, Hawai'i can be an intensely powerful and wise younger sister. Where the Equinox can exude strength and briskness, the Kilauea can reflect diversity and warmth. Both marathons have long, distinguished histories; both can humble and thrash its participants.

The description of the Kilauea Marathon taken from the race description classifies it as one of the world's toughest marathons which "challenges the most hardy endurance runners". The course covers extremely rough, uneven



terrain, starting in Koa forests before traversing the rugged Ka'u Desert for 14 miles, where temperatures can reach 115 degrees. From there the route departs the desert and steeply ascends four miles through hot savanna grassland, then after a brief, rapid descent, continues up a rough, steep trail through dense rainforest for ten miles to the finish. Due to dangerous footing, especially across the sharp and abrasive lava flows in the Ka'u Desert, many runners sustain injuries, some serious.

Held during the last weekend in July (typically the hottest time of the year) one can expect heat, sun and dehydration to be major considerations. Fortunately, this race is exceptionally well supported by hundreds of enthusiastic volunteers and aid/medic stations every 2-3 miles along the route. Due to the logistics and support required for this race, which is run entirely in the backcountry of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, a strict limit of 150 participants has been set.

Fairbanks runners Tina Devine and Libby Burgess (now in

Salt Lake City) ran Kilauea in 2002 after spending a month acclimatizing and training on the course. Both runners finished strong and uninjured. Tina was the top woman finisher and tenth finisher overall, a very impressive showing indeed! Fortunately for Tina, intense sun and piercing heat were not as limiting as they were for many other runners. The 4,000' altitude and 1000' elevation changes along the race course proved to be limiting factors, including for many elite Hawaiian runners who live and train near the ocean.

For runners not wanting to run the marathon, there's also a challenging and very scenic 10.8 mile race around Kilauea Caldera. Both marathon and crater rim runs start together at 6am, with the two different race routes separating after two miles.

At the start, Race Director Howard Shapiro sets the tone for the event, sharing heart-felt reflections from local Hawaiian kupuna having powerful connections to the land across which the race traverses. Like with the Equinox, many Kilauea Marathon runners regard the experience as a spiritual pilgrimage as much as a race, and that while one's individual time and place may be important, so also is the powerful beauty of the place, and being thankful for being alive, right there in the middle of it.

John Lyle, 52, is a retired schoolteacher who with wife Susanne divides his time between Fairbanks, Prince William Sound and Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.

Local skiers attend World Masters, Olympics

By **BRUCE MILLER**

In a nutshell, our trip to Italy for the World Masters Cross Country Ski Championships followed by the Olympics this February was an amazing experience. The vistas, snow, hospitality, food/wine and athletic experiences were simply amazing. Our lodging was a classic Alps chalet nestled at the foothills of the Alps. Our skiing group consisted of myself, Dave Edic, Bad Bob Baker, Janna Miller, Owen Hanley and Chris Puchner. Owen's, Bruce's and Chris' wives also made the trip. Bob did a fantastic job finding this place which was less than a kilometer from the start area for our races. The races were wonderfully executed. They were impressively organized. The courses were more difficult than past worlds but nothing more difficult than anything at Birch Hill. The competition was very stiff. The times were quite fast but the camaraderie was jovial. I made an Italian friend who made the races even more enjoyable. Janna, my wife, really raced well, missing a medal by 17 seconds in her first world masters. (Edic earned Alaska's only medal with a bronze in the men's 45-49 relay). The weather and trail conditions could not be improved upon. The venue is world class.

After our races were complete the real treat was in store. Our chalet was about 1.5 hours north of Torino, with another 1.5 to 2 hours bus ride to the

venues. Janna and I had tickets for the men's 20-kilometer biathlon, women's 3,000-meter long-track speed skate and four Nordic skiing races including both the men's and women's relays. The speedskating was particularly exciting as we sat next to the mother of one of the U.S.

competitors.. The stadium held approximately 7,000 fans, and at least 4,000 wore Dutch orange.

The Nordic races were simply amazing. I am fortunate enough to have raced in a World Cup ski race while I was in high school so I had an inkling of what to expect. It was very exciting for me to share the experience with Janna and see the looks of awe as these Nordic Gods and Goddesses flew through the courses faster than either one of us could sprint for a 100 meters. It was awe inspiring to see other humans perform at a level that at times seems unfathomable. One anecdote from the women's relay was it was exciting to see a fellow Alaskan racing in the women's relay. I cheered for Kikkan Randall by name when she passed through the stadium and afterwards a gentleman sitting a couple of seats over from me came over and thanked me for cheering for her. My quizzical look made him smile as his grin widened from ear-to-ear as he said "I'm her dad". At any moment within a 50-foot radius there would be Norwegian, Finnish, Russian, Slovakian, Swedish, German, Italian and Austrian fans around. There were so many cultures present.

Prickly Pear

— continued from page 1

The location of the park in the middle of town makes it a great place for a trail run. If we run out of anything, we just make a ten-minute trip to the store.

It's a great race for out of towners to run. The course is flat and fast, so it's a good entry-level trail run. The park is just ten minutes from the airport and 15 minutes from downtown and the River Walk. Our awards are three-deep in five-year increments, so a lot of runners leave with hardware.

The race grows each year. The first year we had 150 runners signed up for the 10-miler. This year we're expecting about 400 runners for the ten-mile run, and 100 for the 50k. The weather can be warm and it can be humid. If you're doing the 50k, you can be running in 80-degree temperatures before you're done. It can also be cool and rainy. One year a race-morning downpour turned the trails into mud bogs. But the runners who came out had a blast.

Check out the race website at www.pp1050.com. We hope to see some Fairbanks runners at the Prickly Pear next year! We miss Fairbanks and dream of returning to Alaska some day.

Bill Gardner, 43, lived in Fairbanks from 1989-97. He lives with his wife and 9-month-old daughter in San Antonio, where he works as a residential construction estimator. After several close call, he won the 1996 Equinox Marathon.

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1
139



Volunteers needed at high school track meets

Spring is here, and that means time for another season of high school track and field.

Fairbanks now has three excellent track facilities. The newly upgraded tracks at North Pole and Lathrop will host three of the invitational meets, which feature competition between the seven local schools and other schools from outside Region VI. Then we finish the season at West Valley, where we have the Region VI track meet and the State track meet.

Running Club North will have a major presence in the high school track and field meets as we provide officials for the invitational meets, the Regional meet, and the State track meet, where for the second year in a row, Fairbanks will play host to the best track and field athletes in Alaska.

Running Club North is looking for volunteers to help out with officiating at these meets. No experience is necessary, and one does not need to volunteer for all the meets to be part of the team. Call Steve Bainbridge at 452-8351 or send an e-mail to runner49@alaska.net for more details.

The first meet, scheduled for April 14-15 at North Pole, was canceled due to cold weather. The other invitational meets this season will be April 21-22 and April 28-29 at Lathrop High School and May 5-6 at West Valley. The Region VI Championships are May 12-13 at West Valley, followed by the ASAA/First National Bank State Championships May 19-20 at West Valley. Field events are typically held for each meet on Fridays while most of the track events take place each Saturday.

RESULTS

The following is a non-comprehensive list of recent running results for local runners. The runner's name is followed by the name of the event, date, "chip" or "net" time when available (as opposed to the "gun" time, which would be slower at larger races), overall placing, and for women, place by gender. Notes of interest follow at the bottom. A runner need *not* be an RCN member to be listed.

*B.Newbould	*Ugly Mudder, Reading, PA.	2/26/06	50:19	1
Wayde Leder	*Boston Marathon	4/17/06	2:56.09	699
Andy Holland	Boston		3:04.44	1512
^Jane Lanford	Boston		3:26.27	5122/657
Kathleen Cunniffe	Boston		3:34.19	7180/1333
Steven Bainbridge	Boston		3:35.59	7618
Gayle Garrigues	Boston		4:39.25	17,616
#Heather Hunt	Austin Marathon	2/19/06	2:42.52	62/5
&Bob Hildebrandt	Little Rock, Ark.	3/5/06	6:14.01	1,253
Susanne Lyle	Big Island Marathon	3/19/06	3:58.26	33/3
John Lyle	Big Island Marathon		3:29.57	17

* Brandon Newbould set a course record in winning the rugged 7-mile trail run in Pennsylvania that featured 850 entrants.

^ Lanford's time was good for 8th place in the women's 50-59 division. She was running Boston for the first time since 1987.

Hunt, a former Fairbanksan, qualified for the 2008 U.S. Olympic trials with this race. She lives in Englewood, Colorado and placed 56th in the 2004 U.S. Olympic Trials in St. Louis in 2:48.53.

& Hildebrandt ran Little Rock as a 50-state marathon club reunion with 135 50-staters present, and also got to shake Gov. Mike Huckabee's hand and invite him to Alaska. Arkansas is Bob's 47th state and 93rd marathon overall. It supposedly has the largest marathon medal in the world. "I did not set any speed records, but I was not last place," Hildebrandt said. "Yes, I finished with a smile on my face."